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ABSTRACT

Data from the Work History and Attitudes survey of the Social Change and Economic Life research initiative (SCELI) enquiry of 1986-1989 and the first wave of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) were analyzed to determine their continuity and comparability with regard to employee attitudes in general and job satisfaction and work centrality in particular. The study revealed a high degree of comparability between the two data sets and in the results obtained when they are used. However, several difficulties in comparing the two data sets were also identified. The SCELI was credited with providing good indicators of both human capital ("own-skill") and job skill and for providing extensive details about the technical milieu of work and the work organization, which were deemed good control variables. BHPS was found to offer excellent data on human capital, particularly on recently acquired technical training and vocational and other education. However, BHPS's direct measures of job skill proved minimal. An imputation process was suggested as one way of resolving this difficulty. The material offered by BHPS on partnership and household structures was concluded to be so admirable as to partly compensate for its lack of workplace and organizational data. (Thirteen figures/tables are included. Five additional tables and a comment on the expressive work ethic are appended.) (Author/MN)

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Michael Rose

WORKING PAPER No. 1

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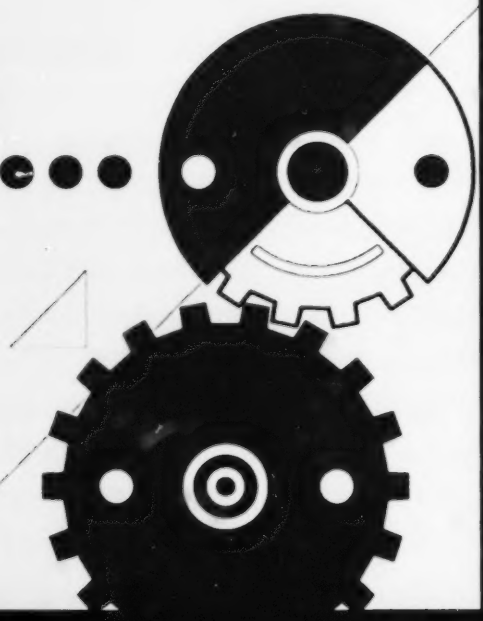

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Employee Skill, Occupation, and Work Involvement

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Employee Skill, Occupation, and Work Involvement

MICHAEL ROSE

ABSTRACT

Presenting results from preliminary analysis for THE Future of Work project on *Work Centrality, Careers, and Household* at Bath University, the paper examines the Work History and Attitudes survey in the SCELI enquiry of 1986-89, and the first wave of BHPS (1991) to examine the degree of continuity and comparability in the material with regard to employee attitudes, especially job satisfaction and work centrality. It finds a high degree of comparability in the two data sets and in results obtained in using them. This is illustrated in some detail. The links between occupation and attitudes are emphasised. So are those with skill. The latter, it is shown, have been recognised in other research; but this has failed to draw a contrast between skill in the sense of *human capital*, on the one hand, and in that of *job content and work role* on the other. In fact, both the skill levels attained by individuals, and the skill required by the jobs they do, seem capable of affecting work attitudes independently - though at times it may be difficult to determine the degree of this independence. What seems to matter most of all is how these modes of skill are combined, often creating *skill discrepancies*. At this point, difficulties of comparison are identified. SCELI provides good indicators for both own-skill and job-skill. It has extensive details about the technical milieu of work and the work organisation. These provide important control variables. BHPS offers excellent data on human capital ('own-skill'), particularly on recently acquired technical training and vocational and other education. Further material of this kind, not used here, is to be found in the work histories. However, its direct measures of job-skill are minimal. One way in which this difficulty might be solved is through an imputation process. An examination of this possibility will be reported in the next working paper. BHPS offers such admirable material on partnership and household structures that these provide a context parallel to that of workplace skill situation which compensates to some extent for the lack of workplace and organisational data in this resource.

Survey data sets used

- *British Household Panel Survey: Waves 1-7 (1991-99). Colchester: The Data Archive [distributor], 15 February 1999. SN: 4069*
- *Social Change and Economic Life. Colchester: The Data Archive [distributor], 5 November 1992. SN: 3273*

Bath
February 1999

Employee Skill, Occupation, and Work Involvement

MICHAEL ROSE

BACKGROUND

This is the first working paper produced for the research project on *Work Centrality, Careers, and Household* in the ESRC Future of Work programme, which began in late 1998. The project is based at the University of Bath and directed by Professor Michael Rose. The research will be making use, through secondary analysis, of four large (several thousand current employees each) data sets, providing recent (last 10 years) data, and embodying a high degree of comparability [1]. The following report is based upon analysis undertaken using two of the data sets: the Work History and Attitudes survey of the ESRC Social Change and Economic Life research initiative (SCELI), and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data. For a description of the SCELI enquiry, see Gallie [1994]. For an account of BHPS, see D.Rose *et al.* [1991].

My own interest in work involvement goes back some time but grew stronger in the 1980s, resulting in the publication of a book on the Work Ethic [Rose, 1985]. Some of my claims were put to the test in the ESRC's research programme on Social Change and Economic Life (SCELI). In the course of SCELI, my interest in the interaction of work attitudes and skill was sharpened by contacts with labour economists, and I received some invaluable tutoring in the analysis of skill and job attitudes in large data sets from other people in the network [2]. There was also an opportunity to examine work attitudes using case-study and open-ended interviewing methods in one of SCELI's 'related studies' undertaken in Swindon [3]. The book *Skill and Occupational Change* [Penn, Rose, and Rubery 1994] reached definite conclusions about skill trends in late twentieth century Britain. We also tried to demonstrate the scope for shifting debate about skill away from the dreary 'degradation versus enhancement' squabble to new empirical grounds, and new problematics.

One new problematic focused on those skills required in daily performance of a job - and recognised as skills by employees - that were overlooked, disregarded, or discounted by their managers - an aspect of *tacit skill* ('soft skill' in the USA) that remains under-researched. [Burchell, Elliott, Rubery, and Wilkinson, 1994]. A second new problematic concerned the linkage between skill and employee subjectivity as expressed in work attitudes and involvement [4]. This new problematic required a sharper conceptual distinction between different aspects of skill. In particular, it called for the examination of how attitudes and experience in the labour market and the workplace might be affected by the interaction of the skill attainment workers brought with them on the one hand ('own-skill') and the skill required in their work role ('job-skill') on the other.

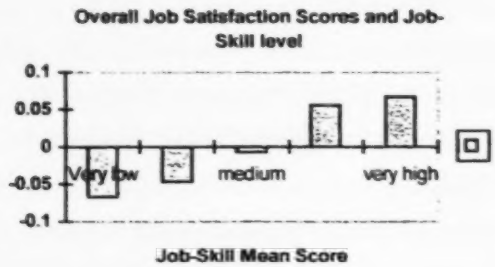
SKILL AND WORK ATTITUDES - REVIEW OF SCELI FINDINGS

Job Satisfaction The first task in *Work Centrality, Careers, and Household* has been a review of the SCELI findings on the links between types and levels of skill and work involvement. Two specific aspects of work involvement show significant links with skill types and skill levels

- both for individuals and for occupational groups targeted on theoretical grounds or for reference purposes as 'known groups'. These two aspects of work involvement are: a) job satisfaction; and b) rationale of working. I shall examine job satisfaction first [5].

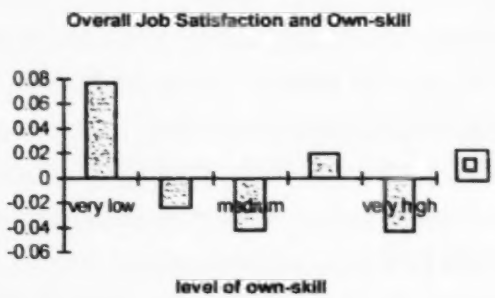
The notion that job satisfaction will rise with the skill level of work is intuitively satisfying. As the skill of jobs rises, so do the elements of challenge, interest, and potential reward. At the same time, the higher the skill of individuals, the better equipped they are to compete for and obtain such desirable work. The essential theorem is accepted, or at least was once accepted, without much further question by sociologists of work, occupational psychologists, and management theorists. It seems so obvious as to be scarcely worth examining any further. Figure 1 overleaf, using the SCELI data, shows the mean scores for an interval level measure of overall job satisfaction, for five skill level groups running from the lowest 20% to the highest 20% of employees. The data appear to confirm that there is not just an association, but that it is linear.

Figure 1



However, this linear association is a weak one statistically, and a closer examination of the data suggests that it is misleading to treat it as linear at all. Turning to own-skill, in Figure 2, where means for overall job satisfaction are shown for five equally banded score levels, even the appearance of linearity disappears. However, the graph does suggest that while low job-skill tends to lower satisfaction, low own-skill tends to raise it. At the other end of the two scales, high job-skill pushes scores for satisfaction up while high own-skill pushes them down.

Figure 2

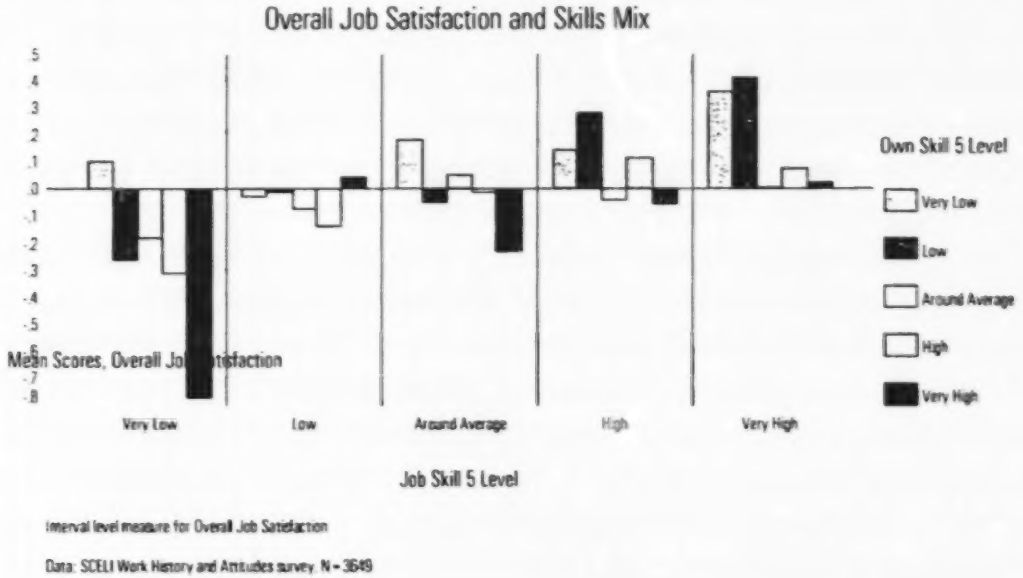


Another way of illustrating the interdependence of types, skill levels, and job satisfaction is provided in Figure 3 (next page). Figure 3 illustrates the fundamental association between own-skill level and overall job satisfaction, controlling for job-skill level. It is immediately clear that by far the most dissatisfied employees are those who have high personal skill but whose current jobs are low-skilled; while the most satisfied employees are those possessing low or

very low own-skill, but who none the less have jobs that have very high job-skill. Broadly speaking, within each band of job-skill, there is a pattern too, with those with lower personal skill expressing higher job satisfaction than those with higher personal skill. It should be noted too, that these data apply to all of the 3649 currently employed people in SCELI; there are some differences between male and female employees, and in particular between part-time and full-time employees. However, for all large labour market segments, however defined, the fundamental situation shown here reappears.

Skill types and skill levels are of course not the only or indeed the most important influences on overall job satisfaction. However, they do figure amongst the most important influences. SCELI provided numerous generalised indicators of the workplace situation of employees, of their own assessments of their labour-market and organisational opportunities, as well as good data on current income and wider socio-economic attitudes. Over twenty such variables remained in regression analyses. Both job-skill and own skill appear in the dozen most influential variables, but with level of own-skill operating negatively. In fact, their relative importance may be higher than these analyses suggest, since some of the most influential variables ('Wish to change jobs in right chance arose', 'Harmonious employer-employee relations at own workplace', or 'Own pay considered fair') may be disguised substitute measures of important aspects job satisfaction, and help account for the very high Adj. r^2 =.467 obtained in this exercise.

Figure 3



One of the most instructive ways to analyse the distribution both of job satisfaction and - as will be shown below - levels and types of work involvement, is to do so by means of targeted occupational groups. Figure 4 shows the mean value for overall job satisfaction in thirty such targeted groups in SCELI. The groups were selected on two main grounds, either their size or theoretical interest (evident or potential), but also to represent all levels of the occupational structure. The scores used here are based on a factor analysis of the eight particular job aspects of satisfaction for which SCELI provides data. It is believed to be a slightly more sensitive measure than the summary question on overall job satisfaction that was also asked.

It is apparent that there is no simple association between occupational level and overall job satisfaction. In so far as occupation acts as a guide to job-skill, there seems to be little connection at all. Several manager groups figure amongst the most satisfied, but so do check-out staff and waiters/waitresses. Domestic staff - which includes school dinner ladies - emerge as the most satisfied group of all, while cleaners come ahead of nurses. At the same time, two professional groups (teachers and social workers) figure among the low (relatively speaking, very low) satisfaction groups. And again, drivers and laboratory technicians both of whom exercise considerably more technical skill, and have higher levels of responsibility built into their work roles, than groups like kitchen porters, counter hands, or check-out staff, none the less register lower job satisfaction.

Figure 4

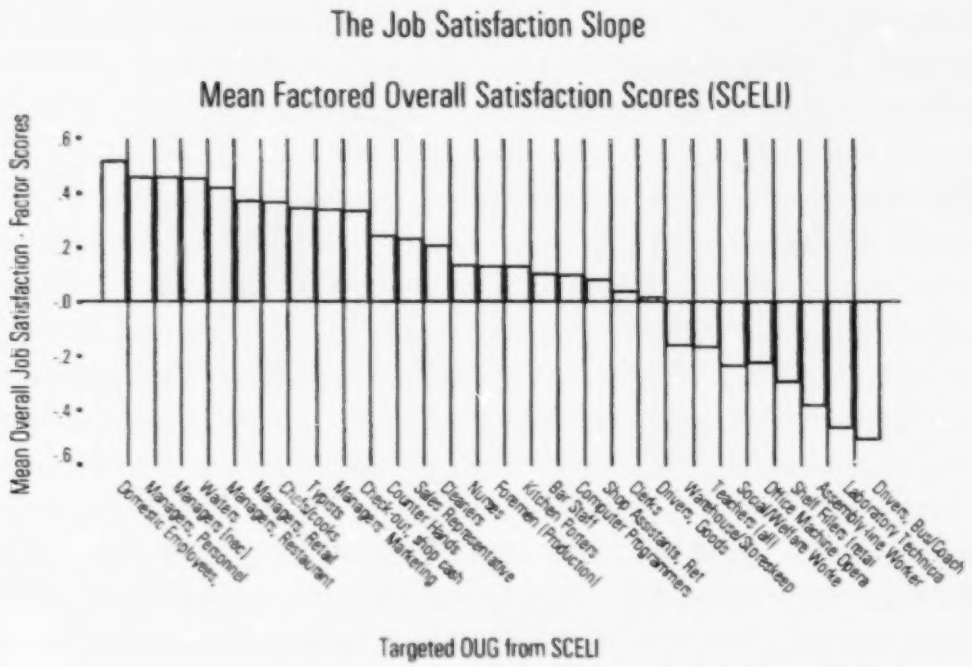


Figure 5 breaks down ten of the targeted occupational groups by five levels of own-skill. One result is that some groups, particularly those with smaller numbers of cases altogether, may produce somewhat misleading distributions. The problem is exacerbated in groups with higher or lower average scores for the skill variables: in the case of high-average groups, there are fewer low scoring individuals, in that of low-average groups there are relatively fewer high scoring cases. These caveats need bearing in mind. All the same, in eight of the ten groups, lower scores for own-skill are associated with higher job satisfaction. However, in two groups, assembly-line workers and retail managers, this is clearly not so. The two groups are among the smaller ones (30 cases and 39 cases respectively), and this frustrates attempts to examine whether this result is an anomaly. (Two possible sources, sex and part-time working can be discounted: they appear to operate, if at all, in a direction that creates still more difficulty, with males and full-time workers being more satisfied than females and part-timers!)

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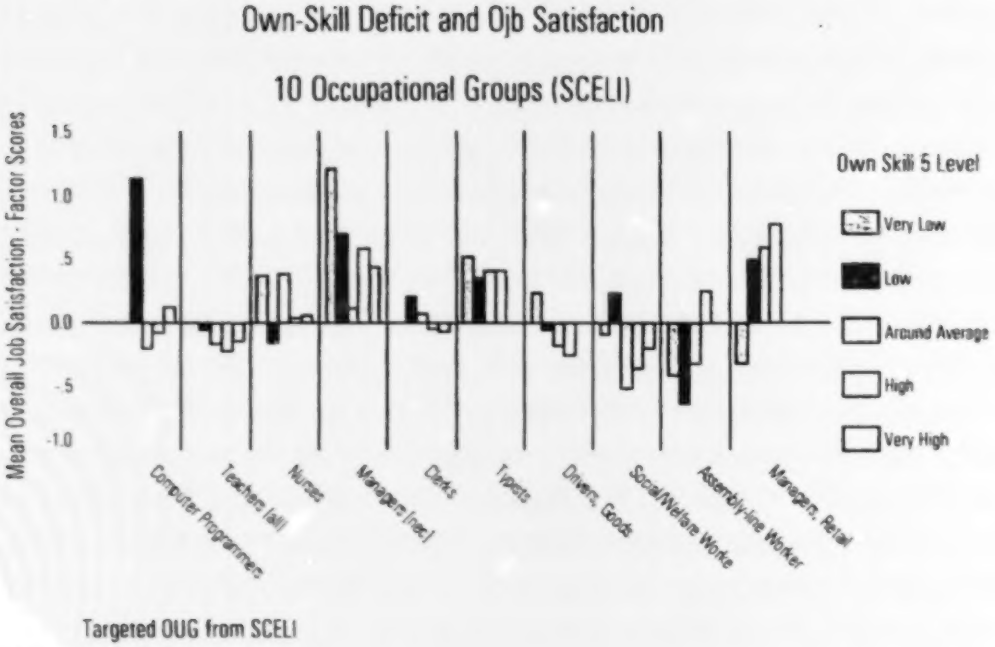
Figure 5



As noted above, the approach via targeted occupational groups was adopted in SCELI in order to explore dimensions of the Work Ethic, and influences on its strength. Discussion of the Work Ethic goes beyond the remit of the present working paper. Two brief comments need to be made here. For one thing, in some eyes, economic individualism - as indicated for example by endorsement to questions about welfare dependency, the treatment of the unemployed, and self-reliance in the labour market - is to be seen as an integral aspect of full commitment to work. However, and it is not just possible theoretically but a firm empirical fact, that persons who strongly endorse such values may themselves have low regard for paid work as an end in itself, and a measure of contempt for those who expend, voluntarily, more effort in the performance of work than is strictly called for by job descriptions or workplace practice. It was established in SCELI that persons scored highly for their work commitment *might* also have high commitment to labour market individualism (as did most types of manager); however, just as often they might have low - indeed, very low - commitment to it (as did teachers or nurses).

The Work Ethic in this sense will not be discussed in this paper. There is insufficient continuity at this point between the SCELI and BHPS data sets to make any straightforward comparison of the two employee samples on this matter. However, there is sufficient overlap to enable comparison of findings on what I shall call the rationale of paid work. Moreover, the types of rationale of work held by individuals, or within designated labour market segments or occupational groupings, is one pointer to the state of the Work Ethic in them. (Some further commentary on the Work Ethic issue has been placed the Appendix to this paper.)

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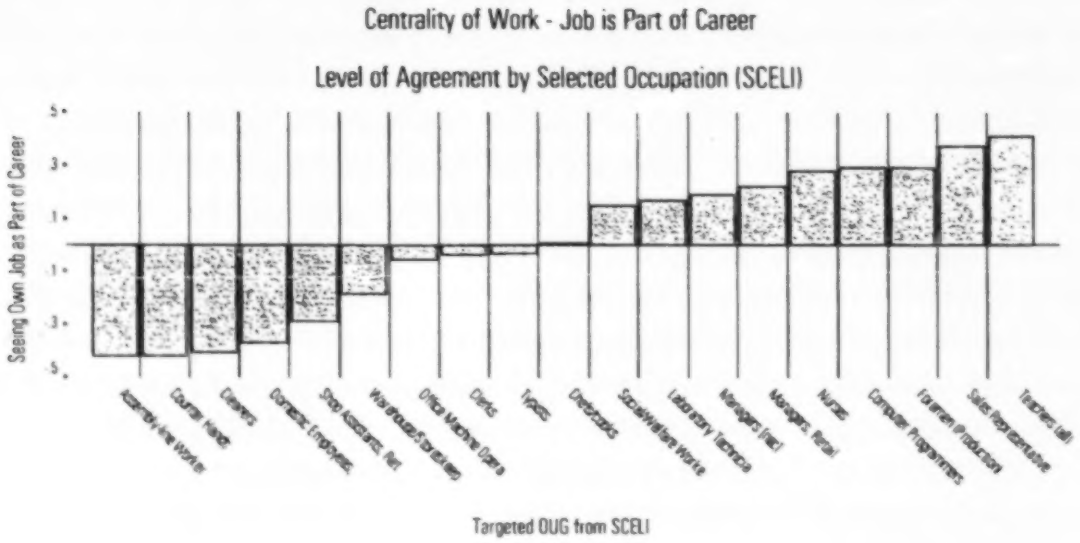
Figure 6



WORK CENTRALITY AND RATIONALES OF WORK (SCELI)

One vital element in assessing centrality of paid work in life as a whole is the readiness of individuals to perceive their labour market activity as part of an evolving plan for their own employment. A current job will be evaluated partly in the light of such a perspective. What may appear to an outsider an unpleasant work role may be seen as merely a necessary, and temporary, step on a ladder of achievement. Occupational cultures may encourage this readiness to perceive jobs as forming parts of a wider whole.

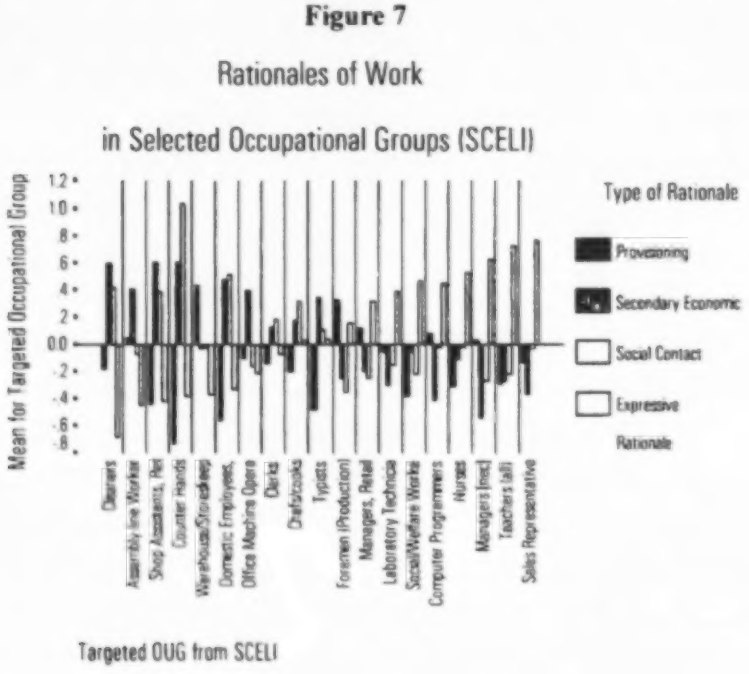
Organisations may offer ready-made job-ladders too, with the more paternalistic promising steady promotion as a reward for tolerating poorly paid, low status posts during early years of the job history. Even those lacking established career ladders to begin climbing may create for themselves 'virtual careers' by retrospectively defining earlier job holding as part of a logically unfolding pattern. Those holding a career perspective, then, can be deemed to give work a higher degree of centrality in their lives than those who, on the other hand, see their work history in terms of chance and opportunism. SCELI asked directly, in a brief but effective 'free-standing' question, whether respondents thought of themselves as having a career. Eliminating a small number of missing or uncertain replies, employees split almost exactly 50-50 on whether they did so.

There are very close associations indeed between the likelihood of saying one has a career and between levels of job-skill and own-skill. Without any other controls at all (even for age, sex, or occupation) $r^2 = .236$. Table 1 (shown in the Appendix) indicates that for someone in both the low own-skill and low job-skill category, the chance of answering yes was just over 1 in 11; for those in the high own-skill with high job-skill category this rose to just over 9 out of 10. It might be noted that persons with very high job-skill but very low own-skill were rather

less likely to say they had a career than persons in posts with very low job-skill who none the less had very high own-skill. Indeed the latter result (highlighted in red) may be an aspect of what might be called the 'management trainee' or 'temporary barman with Ph.D.' pattern. Reverting to the targeted group approach, Figure 6 confirms the findings reported earlier on the importance of skill factors in seeing one's job as part of a career. As the range of scores runs between .01 and 1.0 the levels shown can be read either as percentages agreeing, or as relative positions with regard to readiness to view one's job as part of a career.

Whichever is preferred, there can be no doubt that the question operated as a highly accurate, highly reliable measure. The finding that 7% of assembly-line workers considered they had a career could be qualified by the term 'only', but perhaps it should really be the phrase 'as many as'. The *Sun* might make something of the fact that 8% ('a truly staggering one in twelve'?) teachers failed to see their jobs as part of a career, but since the category embraces *all* teachers, including those intending to take up other careers in due course, or unable to find the jobs in entertainment, the media, or scientific research, etc. that they once hoped to have. The finding means to all intents and purposes that all teachers who see their jobs as permanent consider they have careers - while a sizeable minority of nursing staff obviously do not. Personnel managers, and marketing managers - neither shown, but just under 90% - have almost as high a career score as teachers. It is somewhat surprising to see such a high 'career' orientation amongst sales representatives, and such a relatively low one among social workers. However, to a sociologist of work the chart as a whole should appear convincing.

Figure 7



It can be shown that career orientation has close statistical associations with what will be called here the *rationale of paid work*. As Figure 7 indicates, it is linked positively with *expressive* rationale, and negatively with *secondary economic* (alternatively, *opportunist*) work involvement. There is a weaker negative link with a *social contact* rationale. However, there is at best only a very weak association (it is positive in fact, though the chart suggests otherwise) with a *provisioning* rationale.

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These terms are justified and discussed at length in chapter 10 of *Skill and Occupational Change* [Penn, Rose, and Rubery, 1994), and in its methodological appendix. Provisioning rationale (a largely instrumentalist conception of work activity) is probably spread fairly evenly across the male working population, and to a lesser extent among full-time women employees. It can coexist with a measure of other types of rationale at the individual level, with the exception of *secondary economic* involvement. By itself, it not particularly revealing about the centrality of work in the life of the employee concerned. Employees with a strong *provisioning* orientation to work seem also to be more likely to hold strong self-reliance beliefs and express labour market individualism. There is some reason to expect this rationale to be more highly concentrated in certain blue-collar occupations known for traditionalist (not to say macho) attitudes towards gender issues. (Commercial and public service driver groups have high scores, for example.)

An *expressive* rationale lays relatively high stress on some 'self-actualising' values ('Using my abilities to the full'), on the intrinsic rewards of working ('I enjoy working'), or the sense of having a meaningful life ('Feel I'm doing something worthwhile'). While such orientations can be given a somewhat yukky New Age spin, they can also be reconciled with quite sturdy versions of the Work Ethic as traditionally conceived - it can be argued that 'using abilities to the full' is capable of a distinctly Calvinist interpretation. It was widely argued, in the wake of 1960s socio-cultural turbulence and the rise of the Green Movement, that Expressivism was inconsistent with work discipline or the deferred gratification required in labour market competition and career striving. Such claims are now discounted, and expressivism is seen as a possible source of employee motivation. No further discussion is possible here. However, the link between *expressive* rationale and skill levels is strong. In SCELI, high scores were shared by social workers, teachers, sales representatives, managers as a whole, and (in particular) personnel and industrial relations officers. It is linked more closely with higher levels of own-skill, than with higher levels of job-skill. Improvement in educational standards (if that is what we have, or can expect), and certainly better vocational and professional training, is likely to increase the relative importance of this work rationale.

Comments here about *secondary economic* rationale will also be brief. *Provisioning* rationale and *secondary economic* rationale, it can be argued are in any event mutually exclusive, if only on grounds of logic. They are emphatically incompatible on grounds of correlation coefficients and factor loadings. *Secondary economic* work rationale is concentrated amongst women part-time workers, certainly. Whether this means it is correct to say such employees exemplify an 'anti-Work' ethic [Rose, 1984: chapter 10] or some similar syndrome of prior orientations [Hakim, 1996] remains to be demonstrated finally and convincingly. It bears repeating that rationales of work as conceived here are neither mutually exclusive, nor fixed once and for all. It may well be that what appear as relatively fixed prior work orientations turn out to be more variable and more mutable than claimed.

More analysis needs to be done on this issue - and more *will* be done in the course of the Future of Work programme - paying especially careful attention to the evolution of work histories, and bearing in mind that declarations bearing on work attitudes may be less reliable for indicating future plans than for justifying past action. Meanwhile, as an aid to debate, and without prejudice to any later conslusions based on more exhaustive analysis, the summary results of a regression analysis on scores for *secondary economic* involvement are offered in the Appendix: see Table 5. The most noteworthy feature of Table 5 is the relatively small weight given to sex *per se*, once other controls are present.

JOB SATISFACTION IN THE *BRITISH HOUSEHOLD PANEL SURVEY* (BHPS)

In SCELI, it was possible to construct composite variables for both aspects of skill, and for the various aspects of work commitment. This was done using factor analysis, which offers the advantages of massive data reduction and the creation of unique factor scores for each individual for each new factored variable (dimension). However, the British Household Panel (BHPS) material does not permit creation of directly comparable factored variables. In fact, BHPS does not permit the creation of a satisfactory composite variable for job-skill. It is none the less possible to undertake meaningful comparisons between findings from these different data sets despite these difficulties. In the case of job satisfaction levels, direct comparison of major labour market categories, and of occupational groups, is not just possible but relatively straightforward. BHPS adopted a number of questions directly from SCELI, and in the case of job satisfaction it took no less than eight of SCELI's specific indicators [6]. These questions have been asked each year since 1991. They thus provide a developing record of individual job satisfaction that can be examined in the light of changing work history and household circumstances.

Figure 8

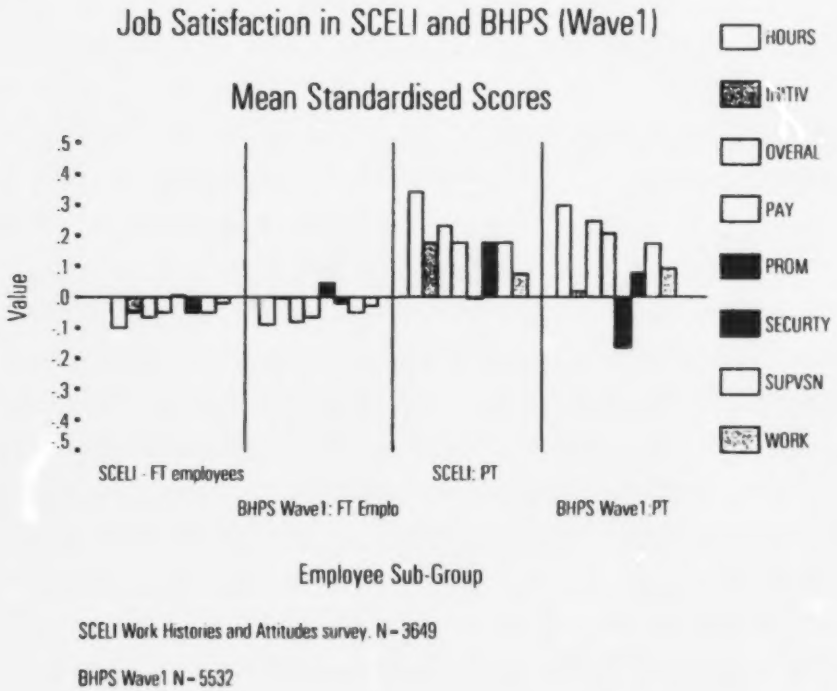
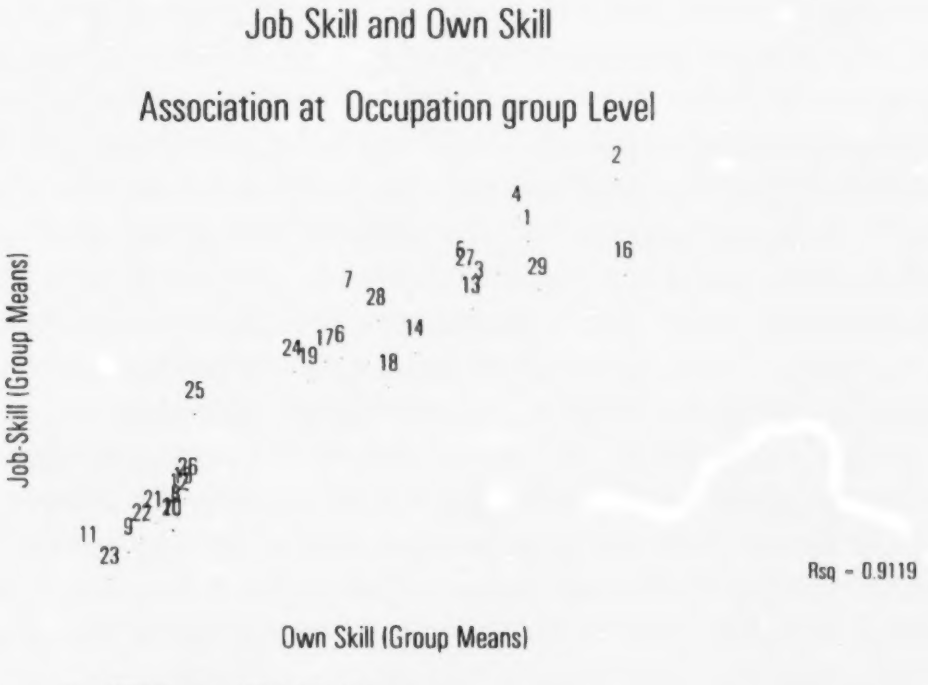


Figure 8 shows the mean scores for job satisfaction of the currently employed in SCELI and in BHPS Wave 1. The most striking feature of the chart is the similarity of the profiles between the two surveys for the full timer and the part-timers. The most striking difference is the lower scores of the BHPS part-timers for satisfaction with job security; however, this may be accounted for by a rather higher proportion of male part-timers in BHPS Wave1. Scores for overall job satisfaction are virtually identical for the two major labour market categories. The

measures here are the input variables used in factoring the interval level scores for overall job satisfaction. Most of the analysis that follows will refer to variables of the latter kind. Once the input variables have been converted into a standardised form, in any case, they become broadly comparable.

A major obstacle to examining job satisfaction scores in BHPS as a product of the balance of own-skill and job-skill is that insufficient indicators exist to provide an exact individual score for the skill exercised in the current job. At this point, comparability with SCELI breaks down almost completely. However, there is one partial solution. The conventional social class measures (Registrar General's, Goldthorpe) are built to some extent on the assumption that they embody important major differences in the skill levels required of those taking jobs within occupations associated with them. It is therefore possible that 'surpluses' and 'deficits' of ownskill can be roughly simulated by reference to the mean for own-skill itself. Statistically speaking, it is likely that the means for own-skill and for job-skill are more closely associated at the level of occupational groups that they are at the individual level. The association is in fact very close indeed. Job-skill and own-skill correlate fairly well, but not spectacularly at the individual level for all SCELI employees (r^2 is just short of .40). However, the *means* of scores in the 29 targeted occupational groups produce an r^2 that is very high indeed, as Figure 8 shows, suggesting that the mean own-skill score for an occupational group might be taken as a fair guide to the mean of its job-skill scores.

Figure 9



Data: SCELI History and Work Attitudes survey

N = 29 Targeted Occupational Groups

Thus it *is* possible to look for some of the skill-balance effects found in SCELI in the BHPS data. These effects are likely to be much less marked because the method for estimating balances is an imperfect - and by the strictest criteria, possibly an invalid one. (Indeed, the writer would particularly welcome feedback on this issue.) None the less, it does produce results that are consistent with those in SCELI. To begin with, those persons having less own-skill in the currently employed sample of BHPS express higher overall job satisfaction, just as they do in SCELI. This is especially clear in the case of their overall job satisfaction.

Table 1

OWN SKILL 'DEFICIT' AND JOB SATISFACTION

Report

YOS_DIFD Own-S above/below Sam Median (BHPS W1		VERALL Jo Satisfactio	ROMOTIO	PAY	ELATION WITH OSS/OW MANAGE	ECURIT	E OF OW NITIATIV	HE WOR ITSELF	HOURS VORKE
BELOW Mec	Mean	.64887	.62217	.53074	.68608	.54693	.69984	.66019	.62621
ABOVE Med	Mean	.55107	.66054	.49302	.63483	.55033	.68553	.60838	.47171
Total	Mean	.59761	.64228	.51097	.65922	.54871	.69234	.63304	.54524
		2597	2597	2597	2597	2597	2597	2597	2597
	Std. Deviati	.49047	.47942	.49998	.47406	.49772	.46162	.48207	.49804

The scores shown are based on a simplified scale running from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 1 (completely satisfied), amongst employees in Targeted Occupational Groups. N=2597

Areas where those with own-skill deficits show less satisfaction (promotion opportunities, job security), are ones where lack of credentials, qualifications, or relevant experience are likely to operate most strongly against them. (In fact, on job security they are only just less satisfied than the high own-skill category.) It cannot be assumed that such persons are generally in the jobs requiring less job-skill. It has to be assumed that, overall, the jobs held by them require as much or almost as much skill as those held by less satisfied employees. Their higher degree of satisfaction with using their own initiative, and with the work itself, even suggests that the jobs they have are at least equal in 'challenge' to those held by the high own-skill employees.

In so far as class reflects broad levels of own-skill, the picture is fairly clear, at least for overall job satisfaction, as Figure 10 showing association with own-skill while controlling for those Goldthorpe classes in which most employees figure.

Figure 10

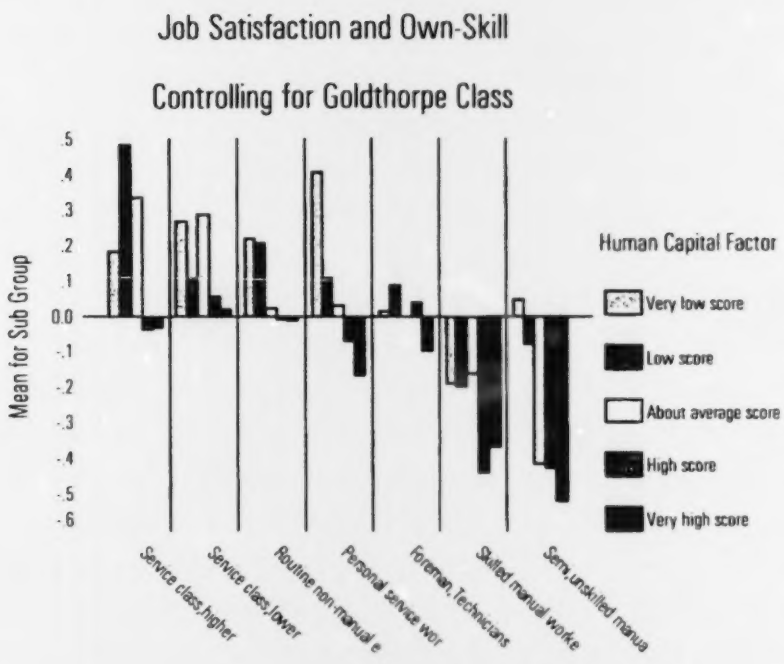


Table 2 (see Appendix), showing mean scores for five levels of own-skill in each of the seven Goldthorpe classes covering occupational groups but employees in agriculture and related activities, introduces an element of control at least for occupational level. At each class level - which here proxies for mean level of job-skill - the score band for the highest mean has been highlighted in green, and lowest score in red. In each case, the highest mean score for satisfaction falls in a lower own-score band than that for the lowest mean score. In three cases, and for the table as a whole, the lowest mean is in highest own-skill band, and the highest mean in the lowest own-skill band.

These overall figures bear out the interpretation of the effect of skill combinations provided earlier and illustrated by SCELI data. It should be noted that effects associated with sex and part-time employment affect scores in some parts of the table. Table 3 gives some indication of the way in which scores alter with sex and working full-time or part-time. It shows two clear tendencies: women have higher satisfaction scores for any given level of own-skill, and so do part-timers - women who are also part-timers generally have the highest scores of all. It would be mistaken to view these purely as gender effects. Evidence from SCELI suggests that, more often than men, women are likely to occupy posts slightly higher in job-skill than males of equal own-skill. This effect is more marked in routine non-manual work than elsewhere. Thus *some* at least of what appears as a gender effect is in all probability a skill-mix effect. Women employees perhaps under-rate their non-negotiable tacit skills more often than men do, and this may apply as well to some of their own negotiable human capital. Even when equally qualified, then, may perceive themselves as less qualified than male competitors for jobs. (Both possibilities need further research.)

The factored measures for overall job satisfaction are used in the next chart, which shows the correlation of groups scores for selected occupational groups using the measures that apply to the data sets concerned. Figure 11 shows that the group means are associated in a highly linear way - almost half the groups are either sitting astride the regression line itself or fall very close to it. There is only one case out of the twenty that could reasonably be regarded as an outlier - number 5, 'Social and Welfare Workers'. It should perhaps be added that the occupational codings used differ slightly in BHPS Wave1: SCELI used the now outmoded OUG scheme, while BHPS uses the soon-to-be-outmoded SOC. It is possible that errors have crept in, and remain despite checking, which affect the coverage of such omnibus groups as 'Clerks' and 'Teachers'. None the less, the chart probably remains a dependable guide to satisfaction levels in the groups concerned in the years of the surveys (1986-7, and 1991-2).

Figure 11

Overall Job Satisfaction, SCELI and BHPS

Selected Occupational Groups

SCELI Work History and Attitudes survey

BHPS Wave1 (1991)

KEY

1	*Telephone operators*	*12*	*Sales Representatives*
2	*Drivers, Bus/Coach*	*13*	*Typists*
3	*Laboratory Technicians*	*14*	*Chefs/cooks*
4	*Assembly-line Workers*	*15*	*Managers, Retail*
5	*Social/Welfare Workers*	*16*	*Managers, Personnel/IR*
6	*Office Machine Operators*	*17*	*Computer Programmers/systems analysts*
7	*Warehouse/Storekeepers*	*18*	*Police officers (sergeant & be*
8	*Teachers (all)*	*19*	*'University & poly teaching pr*
9	*Clerks*	*20*	*Fire service officers (leading*
10	*Shop Assistants/Retail*	*21*	*Cleaners etc.*
11	*Nurses*		

The present paper is concerned with setting out the general approach of the research that is being undertaken for *Work Centrality, Career, and Household*, raising issues that affect the reliability of comparisons between the data sets being used. However, it is impossible to pass by this chart without noting the position on it of certain groups. The group with highest scores for job satisfaction in both surveys was 'Personnel and Industrial Relations Managers', the group with the lowest was 'Bus and Coach Drivers'. In the still sketchy analysis I have done of the more recent waves of BHPS, these two groups always appear among the highest and the

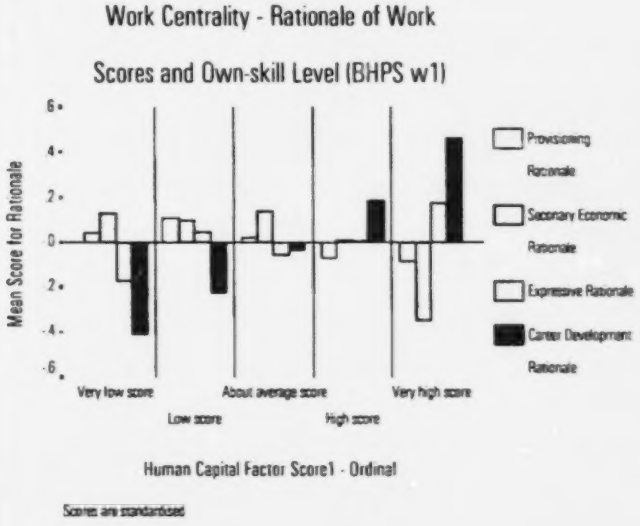
least satisfied with their current jobs. I continue to be surprised that the Police (18), Nurses (11), and Fire-fighters (20) score so highly as they do. This runs counter to the image of public sector work as riven with demoralisation - even school teachers (8) and university teachers (19) come only just below the whole sample means. Laboratory Technicians are another group that always figures amongst the least satisfied. I have added telephone operators to the chart as a point of reference for anyone who is interested in the growth of call-centre work. Using the present occupational codes, this is as close as you can get, and I would expect that call-centre personnel would fall much closer to the mean if separately coded . We shall see. (Apologies, by the way, for the crashing just above group 13 (Typists); the numbers are 14 ('Chefs and Cooks'), and 15 ('Retail Managers').

WORK CENTRALITY IN BHPS

It was noted earlier that BHPS does not provide strictly comparable measures for the indicators of work centrality available in SCELI. Questions bearing upon reasons for changing jobs are asked in the annual BHPS work history updates, and from these certain economic attitudes and work values can be inferred. However, these questions are asked only when a job move occurs. In Wave1, however, the currently employed were asked questions about their rationale of work and here there is some overlap with similar questions in SCELI. Like SCELI, BHPS offered respondents a list of 8 or so reasons for working, allowing them to say which in their own case was the most important and which was the next most important.

In fact, the reasons offered reduce to 4 broad rationales of working: *provisioning* ('Working is normal', 'Work is essential for food, etc.'); *secondary economic* ('Money for extras', 'Money for myself'); *social-expressive* ('Enjoy working', 'For people's company'), and *career pursuit* ('Follow my career'). As in SCELI, it is therefore possible to collapse response categories from eight to four. Replies were prioritised into first and second choice of items, with all items not chosen being deemed a joint third choice. In this way, each individual can achieve a score running from 0 (no item in category chosen), through 1 (one item in category was second choice), 2 (one item in category was chosen first), to 3 (item in category chosen first *and* second).

Figure 12

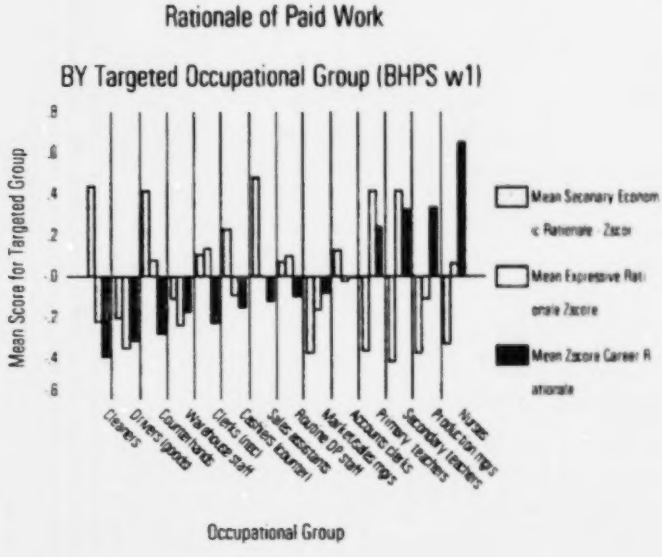


However, since individuals are limited to two choices only, they must score 0 for at least two rationales, and possibly three. At the individual level, then, this procedure may result in serious distortion. However, it can be argued that the relative frequency of choices within groups sharing a broadly similar position to the labour market may well give at least a rough indication of the relative weight given to each of the four rationales within the *group* in question - at least, provided it is represented by a reasonable number of cases. While this may be so, further examination of this measure needs to be undertaken to establish its reliability for comparison with SCELI.

Figure 12 shows the relative strength, for each level of own-skill in BHPS Wave1, of the four main aspects of work rationale. *Provisioning* rationale varied very little in relative strength from one group to another, though it shows a slight tendency here to fall as own-skill increases. *Secondary economic* rationale is stronger at the lower levels of own-skill, but falls very sharply in the top 20% ('very high') band. The strength of a *career development* rationale rises sharply with growth in own-skill. There can be no doubt as to its direct association with rising human capital. As commitment to career aims is one of the best indicators of the centrality of paid work in life as a whole the implications of this finding - first presented in *Skill and Occupational Change* are numerous and important for policy. *Expressive* work rationale scores also rise with level of own-skill, although not so sharply or in such a clearly linear way.

The examination of work vales in SCELI concluded that there may be a relatively powerful association, at the individual level, between career-commitment and a greater emphasis on the intrinsic aspects of work. Figure 13 shows the relative strength of three work rationales in 14 occupational groups targeted to illustrate combinations that are in some way typical for the position of the group in the occupational hierarchy and for the characteristic mix of mean levels of own-skill and job-skill at that level.

Figure 13



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Once again, there appears to be a close association with increases in what is known to be the means levels of job-skill of the groups in question, as well as of own-skill, and a rise in the relative importance of a *career development* work rationale. Scores for *expressive* work rationale follow this rise, but only in a broad way, just a *secondary economic* rationale is strongest among the groups with lower commitment to career development, and (somewhat more evidently) much weaker for the groups highly committed to career development. Provisioning rationale is not shown, in order to simplify the chart. As in the previous example, it varies less than the other rationales. However, as noted at the close of the section on work rationale in SCELI, a *provisioning* rationale is very pronounced among drivers of goods vehicles. The Man in the White Van is not only seriously pissed off with his job. He is also a confirmed economic instrumentalist.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aims of this working were: a) to present results from the Work History and Attitudes survey in the SCELI enquiry of 1986-89, and from the first wave of BHPS in 1991, bearing on job satisfaction and work centrality among current employees; b) compare these results, with special attention to the way they might be affected by skill and occupation; c) in doing so, to draw a contrast between skill in the sense of *human capital*, on the one hand, and in that of *job content and work role* on the other; and e) to examine the extent to which each of these factors could, separately and in combination, affect job attitudes.

The findings presented are fairly clear, though some of them remain provisional. The data available in these surveys, it was shown, permit extensive and richly illustrated comparisons along the lines offered here. Both the skill levels attained by individuals, and the skill required by the jobs they do, seem capable of affecting work attitudes independently - though at times it may be difficult to determine the degree of this independence. What may matter most of all is how these modes of skill are combined. In some ways, the contrast between the effects of skill levels and skill combinations on job attitudes is best achieved through an analysis of selected occupational groups.

Strengths and weaknesses in each data set have been identified. SCELI provides good indicators for both own-skill and job-skill. It has extensive details about the technical milieu of work and the work organisation. These provide important control variables. BHPS offers excellent data on own-skill, particularly on recently acquired technical training and vocational and other education. Further material of this kind, not used here, is to be found in the work histories. However, its measures of job-skill are barely adequate for the type of analysis attempted here. More detail on qualifications *required* in the jobs individuals do, and in the length of time taken to learn to do them well, is required for that purpose. Similarly, there is a lack in BHPS, after Wave1, of material on the centrality of work to individuals. On the other hand, there is a remarkable degree of continuity and comparability with the SCELI data on job satisfaction.

The great advantage of BHPS is evidently its longitudinal nature. Thus it is possible to follow through the development of work histories. Material relevant to some aspects of work centrality can no doubt be extracted from the BHPS work history updates, though it is not yet known how closely this will provide indicators that approximate to those examined in this paper. Furthermore, BHPS offers material on partnership and household structures that

provide a detailed context for examining work attitudes which compensates for the lack of workplace and organisational data.

The work undertaken so far has proceeded very much as expected, perhaps even a little more rapidly than anticipated. It is unlikely that relationships between skill variables and job attitudes change dramatically over the short term. Thus the secondary analysis of material that is now between 8 and 12 years old can still provide important insights into the interaction of key variables. It will thus be possible to make very precise suggestions for future research in this area, and for the design of instruments to enable it to proceed in a productive way.

University of Bath
February 1999

APPENDIX

Table 1

Probability of Saying One Has a Career BY Own-Skill and Job-Skill

Report

Job-Skill	Own-Skill	X115 Career (Work Seen As?) Mean
1 Very Low	1 Very Low	.0914
	2 Low	.1671
	3 Around Average	.2457
	4 High	.3908
	5 Very High	.8020
	Total	.1548
2 Low	1 Very Low	.2037
	2 Low	.3219
	3 Around Average	.3164
	4 High	.5417
	5 Very High	.5233
	Total	.3159
3 Around Average	1 Very Low	.3079
	2 Low	.3757
	3 Around Average	.4964
	4 High	.5458
	5 Very High	.7762
	Total	.5064
4 High	1 Very Low	.5521
	2 Low	.5160
	3 Around Average	.6460
	4 High	.7547
	5 Very High	.8358
	Total	.7140
5 Very High	1 Very Low	.6287
	2 Low	.4935
	3 Around Average	.8005
	4 High	.7341
	5 Very High	.8894
	Total	.8064
Total	1 Very Low	.1941
	2 Low	.3246
	3 Around Average	.4964
	4 High	.6496
	5 Very High	.8410
	Total	.5002

Table 3

Report

Overall Job Satisfaction BY Own-Skill Score Band, controlling for Goldthorpe Class (BHPS Wave1 employees)

		Mean
1 Service class,higher grade	1.00 Very low score	.18592
	2.00 Low score	.48586
	3.00 About average score	.33654
	4.00 High score	-.03433
	5.00 Very high score	-.03375
2 Service class,lower grade	1.00 Very low score	.26986
	2.00 Low score	.10626
	3.00 About average score	.28875
	4.00 High score	.05649
	5.00 Very high score	.01991
3 Routine non-manual employees	1.00 Very low score	.22184
	2.00 Low score	.20741
	3.00 About average score	.02431
	4.00 High score	-.00768
	5.00 Very high score	-.01143
4 Personal service workers	1.00 Very low score	.40747
	2.00 Low score	.10785
	3.00 About average score	.03103
	4.00 High score	-.06789
	5.00 Very high score	-.16424
8 Foreman,Technicians	1.00 Very low score	.01797
	2.00 Low score	.08798
	3.00 About average score	-.00184
	4.00 High score	.03843
	5.00 Very high score	-.09609
9 Skilled manual workers	1.00 Very low score	-.18882
	2.00 Low score	-.19749
	3.00 About average score	-.16176
	4.00 High score	-.43613
	5.00 Very high score	-.36304
10 Semi,unskilled manual workers	1.00 Very low score	.04695
	2.00 Low score	-.07418
	3.00 About average score	-.41103
	4.00 High score	-.42470
	5.00 Very high score	-.51659
Total	1.00 Very low score	.09917
	2.00 Low score	.06671
	3.00 About average score	-.01463
	4.00 High score	-.06150
	5.00 Very high score	-.06712

Goldthorpe classes 5, 6, 7 (self-employed, farmers) and 11 (agricultural workers) omitted. The same results do in fact reappear among agricultural workers.

Scores in this table are based on the factored score for overall job satisfaction derived from input variables coverted to standardised scores (z-scores)

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Table 4

Report

Overall Job Satisfaction BY Own-Skill Score Band, Sex, and Hours Worked per Week - GOLDTHORPE CLASS 3 (ROUTINE NON-MANUAL EMPLOYEES) ONLY

			Mean
1.00 Very low score	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.11383
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	1.30997
		Total	.00998
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	.00918
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.62140
		Total	.29247
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.03779
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.66190
		Total	.22184
2.00 Low score	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.34877
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.35384
		Total	-.21229
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	.20391
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.38830
		Total	.27291
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	.09607
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.38782
		Total	.20741
3.00 About average score	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.26193
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.36510
		Total	-.12832
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.01619
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.22465
		Total	.06367
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.07278
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.24389
		Total	.02431
4.00 High score	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.18507
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	-.19203
		Total	-.18577
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.04346
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.21564
		Total	.04046
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.08008
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.18109
		Total	-.00768
5.00 Very high score	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	.03677
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.05507
		Total	.03720
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.07310
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	-.01873
		Total	-.04263
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.02452
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	-.01306
		Total	-.01143
Total	1 Male	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.16175
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.30104
		Total	-.10145
	2 Female	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	.02026
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.31508
		Total	.12298
	Total	1 Full time: 30 hrs +	-.03029
		2 Part time: lt 30 hrs	.31402
		Total	.07379

N=873

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Table 5

Linear Regression on Scores for Secondary Economic work Rationale

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.516[a]	.266	.266	.9160042
2	.563[b]	.317	.316	.8842360
3	.577[c]	.333	.332	.8737512
4	.608[d]	.370	.369	.8493338
5	.613[e]	.376	.374	.8455423
6	.617[f]	.381	.378	.8426622
7	.621[g]	.386	.383	.8395090
8	.624[h]	.390	.387	.8369742

a. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score

b. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval

c. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level)

d. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level), X115_CHT

e. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level), X115_CHT, SEX

f. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level), X115_CHT, SEX, JHGNOW respondents current jhg class 80

g. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level), X115_CHT, SEX, JHGNOW respondents current jhg class 80, AGE

h. Predictors: (Constant), PROVSCOR Provisioning Work Values Score, JS_FACI Job Skill Interval, XMACHO Macho Work Involvement (Level), X115_CHT, SEX, JHGNOW respondents current jhg class 80, AGE, OS_FACI Own-Skill Interval

NOTE: Method= Stepwise. Predictor variables in order of entering equation: Score for Provisioning Rationale (low), Job-Skill, (low) Macho Work Values (high), Career Orientation (low), Sex (being a woman), Goldthorpe Class (simplified) (low), Age (younger), Own-skill (low). If it establishes nothing else, this regression exercise demonstrates that a *provisioning* work rationale is inconsistent with *secondary economic* aims. However, it also suggests that moving to a higher skill job amy of itself exert quite a strong influence *against* the *secondary economic* rationale.

The Expressive Work Ethic: A Comment

My examination of the work ethic for SCELI was strongly affected by two sets of factors. First, there was the political climate of the mid-1980s, decisively dominated at last by New Right socio-economic theories after the defeat of the 'Wets' and One-Nation Tories in the government. Policy, rhetoric, and exhortation clearly aspired to alter what Thatcherites saw as a weakened commitment to work in many parts of the labour force, which had been allowed to develop thanks in part to 'excessive' welfare provision and the growth of dependency culture and entitlement psychology. Reviving the work ethic would entail encouraging self reliance, individual striving, and a rationale of work stressing its essential importance as a provisioning activity - an activity inseparable from the provider or breadwinner role. Inspired by their own visions, this leadership all but slipped into defining the will to work uniquely as a product of labour market individualism.

From a quite different direction came sociological theories of post-industrialism. Writers following Bell often suggested that the shift away from manufacturing employment would have profoundly negative implications for the 'Protestant Work Ethic' - a term which, incidentally, never appears anywhere in the works of Max Weber. At the least, a services-based economy would result in the displacement of work from its former position as a central life interest. (Bell himself went so far as to talk of the 'de-sacralisation' of Work.) Political scientists had also been arguing that 'post-materialist' aspirations would increasingly determine the political agenda and require a redefinition of economic aims and activity. Both types of writer forecast a growth in 'expressivism'. Impressed perhaps by the popular culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and inclined to give more credit than was wise to the pronouncements of a few celebrity Hippie fellow-travellers in Academia, such observers for the most part accepted that a growth of 'expressivism' must be inconsistent with continuing commitment to the work ethic.

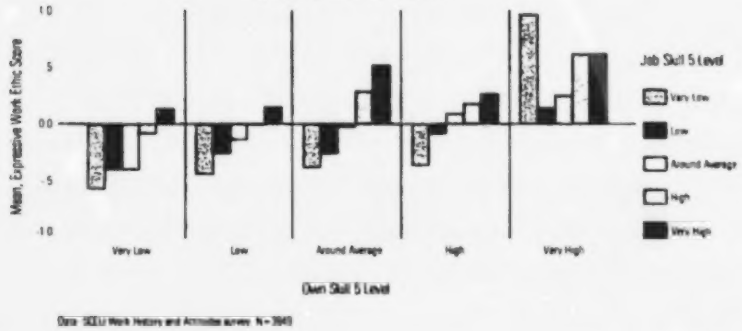
There were deep flaws of a logical kind in both sets of arguments. Their most obvious gaps were empirical. Thatcherite enthusiasts of Victorian Values seemed out of touch with Victorian realities. An unfettered market in unskilled labour, combined with the sketchiness of public welfare, imposed a pattern of rugged individualism. Whether Victorian labourers heartily endorsed such values is another question. It is questionable whether a majority of the working population had *ever* held Protestant Work Ethic values. To talk of their abandonment in these circumstances was foolish.

Similar arguments applied to the post-industrial theorists, at least to their contention that new values were displacing or supplanting older ones. The identification of a newly stronger 'expressive' *emphasis* in work related values might well be essentially correct. What was questionable was the notion that the new value emphases might be incompatible with strategic commitment to paid employment. Far more likely, a new stress on expressive values would be accommodated within existing value schemes, modifying modes of subjective work attachment without transforming them into something quite different. Indeed, it was not long before management theorists began pointing out that expressive work values might form the basis of a *renewed* (and of course, 'better!) work ethic for the second millennium.

Figure 14

Expressive Work Ethic Score

By Own-Skill and Job-Skill



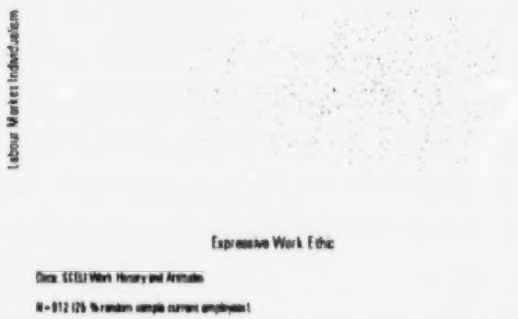
The overall tendency illustrated in Figure 14 is for the Expressive Work Ethic score to rise as both own-skill and job-skill level rises. There appears to be an anomaly in the 'very high' own-skill band, where the mean is highest of all for persons with very low job-skill. However, there are two possible explanations for this. Firstly, the number of persons in this band is low, below 10, with several untypical individuals able to influence the mean; secondly, some of these persons were probably holding a very low-skilled job on a temporary basis (the 'Ph.D barmaid') or because it formed a compulsory step in an organisational career ladder (the Sainsbury's management trainee, working the checkout till).

Scatter charts for individual scores for the measures used look like what happens to a sheet when a shot-gun is fired at it (see Figure 15). For technical reasons (the scores are produced by a rotated factor analysis) little correlation between individual scores for expressive work ethic and for individualism would be expected in anycase.

Figure 15

Expressive Work Ethic and Labour Market Individualsism

SCELI Employees



In Figure 16 (next page) shows the combination of mean scores for labour market individualism and for expressive work ethic of occupational groups targeted on theoretical and empirical grounds. This distribution starts to make considerable sociological, and possibly political, sense. Although just two groups (bus/coach drivers, and computer programmers/systems analysts) have lower mean scores for *both* work values, and there are a disproportionate number of groups with higher scores for both expressive work ethic and

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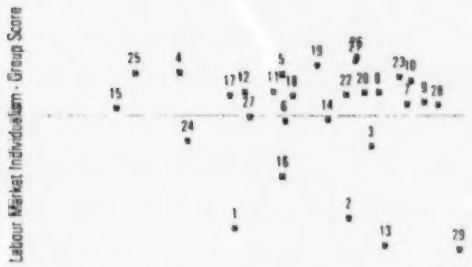
higher labour market individualism, all four main combinations of scores are illustrated. It is worth noting two features of the distribution.

Firstly, teachers, nurses, and social workers fall in the same quadrant - together with a managerial group (personnel and IR managers) with a particularly high mean score for Expressive Work Ethic and the lowest mean score too for Labour Market Individualism. Secondly, the six supervisory/managerial groups fall in very different parts of the field. Finally, the catering groups (chefs/cooks, bar staff, kitchen porter, and waiters) come close to sharing the same point. These findings are not altogether inconsistent with what experience, everyday field knowledge, and common sense would lead one to expect. However, further discussion will occur at a later point in the projcct.

Figure 16

Work Values Space

Targeted Occupational Groups



Data: SCELI Work History and Attitudes survey

KEY

1 Computer Programmers, systems Analysts
2 Teachers (all)
3 Nurses
4 Foremen (Production)
5 Managers [nec]
6 Clerks
7 Typists
8 Shop Assistants, Retail
9 Counter Hands
10 Domestic Employees, Dinner Ladies, etc.
11 Cleaners
12 Assembly-line Workers
13 Social/Welfare Workers
14 Sales Representatives
15 Warehouse/Storeskeepers
16 Laboratory Technicians
17 Managers, Retail
18 Office Machine Operators
19 Chefs/cooks
20 Bar Staff
21 Waiters
22 Kitchen Porters
23 Shelf Fillers (retail)
24 Drivers, Bus/Coach
25 Drivers, Goods
26 Check-out, shop cashiers
27 Managers: Marketing
28 Managers, Restaurant/Canteen
29 Managers (Personnel)

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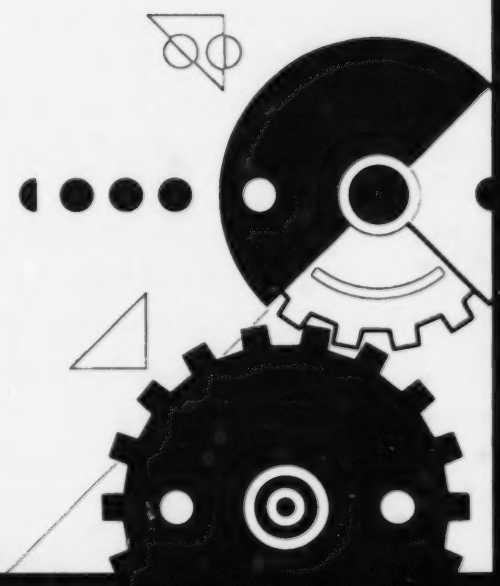

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